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Services Division

Committee on China

Committee Minutes - 181st Meeting - 21 October 1958

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D/S Representatives:

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Guests:

1. On 14 October the Chinese announced plans to construct a new bridge across the Yangtze River at Nanking because of the increasing demand for transport north and south of the river. Survey and design of the new bridge has started and construction is scheduled to begin next year. The design and construction work will be done by Chinese technicians. The amount of work involved on this bridge will be four times greater than that of the Yangtze Bridge at Wuhan.

COMMENT: The north-south rail traffic on the Tientsin-P'u-k'ou and Nanking-Shanghai lines is severed at Nanking by the Yangtze River and is serviced by rail ferries between P'u-k'ou and Nanking. Construction of a bridge in the vicinity of Nanking is possible although it will need to be longer and higher than the Wuhan bridge. The start of work on this bridge indicates the increasing capability of China's bridge constructors to undertake major bridge projects.

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2. On 15 October Peking announced that the volume of freight originated on the highways and waterways of China in September amounted to more than 64 million tons, an increase of more than 12 million tons over the monthly average for the first 6 months of 1958.

COMMENT: If this information is accurate the total amount of freight originated on the highways and waterways during the first 6 months of 1958 must have been about 312 million tons. If the September trend continues, between 650 and 700 million tons will be originated by the end of the year. This total probably includes both modern and primitive forms of transport, since modern highway and inland waterway transport combined originated only 145.6 million tons in 1957. It is estimated that more than 380 million tons of freight will be originated by the railroads in 1958.

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3. According to a broadcast from Shanghai of 29 September, the construction of the second television station in China was completed there recently. Experimental telecasts were scheduled to start 1 October.

COMMENT: The other television station currently in operation is located in Peking. A third television station is scheduled to begin operation at Canton early in 1959.

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4. A recent official announcement states that electric power production for the first three quarters of 1958 amounted to 19.17 billion kwh, not including local production.

COMMENT: If the present rate is maintained, production will meet the "leap forward" goal of 27.5 billion kwh by the end of the year. This amount will be an increase of over 40 percent above 1957 production.

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5. A Chinese businessman, travelling in August from Shanghai to Hong Kong, went by train to Amoy and then by bus to Hong Kong. He reported delays up to 16 hours on the Amoy railway due to the "line falling to pieces".

COMMENT: Although the poor condition of the newly constructed line is probably exaggerated, it is likely that, before and since August, extremely heavy traffic has caused severe strain on the permanent way, particularly during the wet season now ending. Quite apart from the Quemoy operations, new rail construction on the Chang-p'ing - Chuan-chou and Chang-p'ing - Lung-yen lines could cause traffic delays due to priority of supply trains. Overworking and the reported dilapidation of the Amoy line could be one factor contributing to extension of the cease fire, since the Chinese could be experiencing delays in replenishing ammunition and in moving in replacement gun barrels.

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Agenda: The next regular meeting will be 4 November, at 1400, Room 1125 M. Current items will be discussed.

Two films will be shown on Friday, 14 November, in Bldg. 14, at 1400. One is a color film on Tibet and the other a recent film on North Korea. Total time: 90 minutes.

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At the regular meeting on 18 November, Mr. [REDACTED], IR, will discuss the functions of and types of materials retained by that office.

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ORR/S/CST: [REDACTED] /pnb/2821 (15 October 58)